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SEIU 1199NE
Yvonne McCleese Otero
New Haven
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Yvonne McCleese Otero, I live in New Haven, and I've worked as an Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA) at the Advanced Center of fully funding nursing homes in Connecticut.

While I have worked at the Advanced Center for Nursing and Rehab for 10 years, I have worked in the nursing home field for 15 years. As a CNA, we make sure all our residents' needs are met. This includes bathing, toileting, feeding, helping them walk and move around, and making sure they are hydrated. We keep residents company and provide them with friendship as well as direct care.

In our building we have residents of all backgrounds and walks of life. We have residents from other countries who teach us about their culture. It is a joy to get to know them and as you care for them, they become like family to you.

Unfortunately, short staffing has severely impacted our ability to provide the care our residents deserve. On a good day we have three CNAs to 30-40 residents. On bad days we have two CNAs to 40 residents. That is unacceptable. Management doesn't help in these instances either. They do not provide direct care to residents, and quite frankly we do not feel supported as staff.

Short staffing also prevents us from retaining the caregivers we can hire. I have been to many orientations recently and we have a lot of people attend and then never come back because the work is so challenging. The population we care for continues to change and become more acute. While we still care for elderly residents, we are also caring for people struggling with substance abuse, homelessness, and behavioral conditions. We do not receive additional training to care for these types of residents, which combined with short staffing only makes our jobs harder and more unmanageable.

Addressing short staffing is a matter of funding. Nursing homes need more funding in order to hire more staff, and to pay those staff more so they will stay. This committee has the power to provide homes with the funding necessary to do so. You can also fund bills like SB 989 which will improve staffing standards across the state. The state needs to do more nursing home residents and their caregivers. Please fund our nursing homes.

Thank you.